

Mindfulness and Spirituality as determinants of Existential Loneliness in the Dutch  
population

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### **Abstract**

Existential loneliness is a concept that is largely ignored in the psychological research tradition, although from a philosophical perspective it is deeply connected to inherent human longings of connection and meaning. This research investigated the relationship between existential loneliness and two variables that are theoretically closely related to the concepts of connection and meaning, namely mindfulness (connection to oneself and others) and spiritual well-being (connection to a larger whole). This was done in a sample of  $n = 180$  individuals (61.7% female; mean age 41.72,  $SD = 12.16$ ) of the Dutch population. A multiple regression analysis was conducted. It can be concluded that there is a negative relationship between mindfulness and existential loneliness, as well as between spiritual well-being and existential loneliness. This means that people with a higher level of mindfulness and/or a higher level of spiritual well-being experience a lower level of existential loneliness. At the same time, people with a lower level of mindfulness and/or spiritual well-being experience a lower level of existential loneliness. There are some limitations to this study, for example the use of a non-random sampling method, a limited sample group, a scale that has not been widely tested, and a potential bias towards the higher educated. However, these limitations are inherent to exploratory research and does not diminish the main strength of this thesis, namely that it has provided more insight into an important and prevalent societal phenomenon, that had not been extensively researched previously, that has so far only been addressed in more philosophical instead of scientific debates, and linked almost exclusively to negative concepts, such as terminal illness. This research provides a first understanding of two positive determinants of existential loneliness, which could potentially be used to help make sense of this inherently humane condition, as well as to actively cope with the potential (adverse) effects of it.

*Keywords:* existential loneliness, mindfulness, spiritual well-being